

Extension Service  
U. S. Department of Agriculture

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Reserve

Field Travel That Bores Deep

Versus

Field Travel That Simply Bores

by

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What's It All  
About, Anyway

About as effective as Penelope knitting by day and raveling by night is field travel without an understanding of the responsibilities involved. Field travel to the States and counties should be concerned with advancing good relations, it is true. That is very important. We must not minimize the significance of good relations.

But are good relations the sole objective? And what do we mean by good relations? Can we not easily jeopardize our broad objectives by bearing down too much on "be-a-good-fellow" type of personal relations and not enough on organizational relations.

We, of course, all realize that in visiting a State we are making ourselves into two-way channels.....carrying ideas and information to the State and bringing them back. But don't we have responsibilities beyond that and beyond maintaining good relations? It seems to me that we do. At least I look at it that way and try to consider some of the other important (I think they are important) angles of responsibility concerned with field travel.

If I were to express it all in one word, I would take the word "coordination," although that isn't really all of it. What we really need is a deep sense of common aim and continuity .....advanced through the processes of exchanging ideas, profiting from each other's experiences, solving mutual problems with companionable ease.

Coordination isn't something that you have done for you by someone else. It's a state of mind.....an attitude. You do it yourself or it isn't done.

Coordination, to me, means orientation.....planning.....organization.....cooperation.....systematic execution.....coordination, of course, with due regard to the sources of authority and focused upon the objectives provided by those authorities. These are all semantic words which, in simple language, mean that you should join with others in an orderly and sustained effort to do the right official things in the right official way.

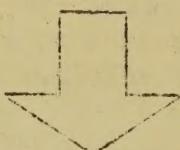
In the following outline, I have tried to earmark some of the ideas of the Division of Extension Information regarding field travel. These ideas may be followed consciously or unconsciously. I might say that we have no difficulty in putting them into effect. We have no difficulty because all our staff members feel the same way. As a matter of fact, they are usually 'way out ahead of me.

I might also say that some of the things that we do require much extra work. But it is worth the additional effort. After all, we or our successors are going to be here a long time. If we build steadily and surely on stalwart foundations, we can make a substantial contribution to this great educational movement of which we are so proud.

Field travel, of course, is one facet of our work.....one, to be sure. Nevertheless, it is the most important piece in the entire Federal Extension mosaic. It is the most important because, as far as we are concerned, it concentrates in one spot everything that Extension stands for.....everything. Let's not forget that.

Back of field travel lies a most fruitful land .....a land that can be made very productive if we cultivate it. Field travel.....successful field travel, that is.....is the fruit of proper cultivation of this land.

And so we must start our outline for the Division of Extension Information ahead of the time that the staff member leaves for the field.....'way ahead.



Unrolling the Field Travel Map  
of the Division of Extension Information

(I) Orientation (Let's all pull together).(A) Orientation as to Principles.

- (1) You are a member of the staff of the Federal office of the Cooperative Extension Service. However, you are representing not only this office, but also the United States Department of Agriculture and the Federal Government. So keep your activities closely attuned to rural needs as reflected in congressional acts and U. S. D. A. and Federal Extension policies interpreting those acts. The Extension Service is the educational arm of the U. S. D. A. and that arm must properly reflect the Government's policies with reference to agriculture and rural life. If you do not agree with some policy, keep that as your personal opinion and not as a reflection of the position of the Federal Extension Service.
- (2) Don't forget that there are many activities going on in Congress, in other executive departments, in the United Nations organization, in rural areas, or elsewhere which may focus into definite programs or in which rural people may be interested. Keep a weather eye open for such movements so that you will understand the reasoning behind them, and can interpret them intelligently when the proper time arrives. The Federal extension program is not sufficient unto itself. It reflects a much broader field of agricultural and national interest, and it is helpful to view it in its proper perspective.
- (3) Remember, please, that the Cooperative Extension Service is essentially a local service backed up actively by the powerful resources of the State and Federal Governments. The key is voluntary individual participation with the purpose of awakening and sharpening minds to give them an opportunity to develop creatively for self-expression and for group expression so that their full powers can be brought to bear successfully upon the problems of the day. The Cooperative Extension Service is not a so-called straight-line agency. It grew from the bottom up rather than from the top down. Its policies, its financial support, its program execution, its leadership, are completely cooperative among county, State, and Federal Governments and farm people. Consequently, you cannot make any demands upon the States that rest solely upon Federal authority. It is true that the U. S. D. A., through the Federal Extension Service, can exercise a very few lines of administrative authority, but none of them has been delegated to this division. So..... leadership is exercised in the most difficult, yet the most effective way possible.....by virtue of merit. It rests upon intelligence, ability, and personality.....and an understanding of how to present the facts to the States in a convincing and tactful way in order to encourage the necessary State actions.

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- (4) Information is effective only if it is read, heard, assimilated, and acted upon. Success of our work cannot be measured in terms of the volume of radio time used, of news stories, magazine articles, publications, or other materials distributed from Washington. The important factor in influencing acceptance of national information is to adapt it to local problems, situations, and thinking. That means:
- (a) It must not be in conflict with research undertaken in the area where the information is released.
  - (b) It must be presented with an understanding of local rural psychology.....in terms of local experience and knowledge .....and in the words that farm people understand.
  - (c) It must be issued from the closest authoritative source to farm people by someone in whom they have complete confidence.
  - (d) It must be factual.

We should, then, encourage as much as possible the principle of local adaptation of national information and use the procedures necessary to carry out the principle.

- (5) The county extension agent is the keystone of cooperative extension work. In the last analysis it is what he or she does that counts most. Everything that is vital to extension work comes to a focus in the agent as it does in no other extension worker. We should keep constantly in mind the importance of (a) supporting county extension work through national media and (b) strengthening county work by servicing and aiding the agents (through State channels) in making more effective use of visual and information media.
- (6) Information is not the exclusive property of the extension information specialist. The dissemination of information is the basic responsibility of every extension worker. So share your specialized knowledge in the visual and information fields with other members of the Extension staff and encourage them to prepare and use these media in strengthening their work.
- (7) Information materials cannot be prepared in a vacuum. A successful information program must consider:

Policy.....subject-matter content.....economic background .....psychology of interpretation.....public communication media.....public relations.....inter- and intra-agency relations.....spot checking, etc.

Since the coordinated, concerted, and cooperative effort of the entire Federal Extension staff is necessary for success as well as close relations with other U. S. D. A. agencies, your

success and the effectiveness of the Division's program will depend upon how well you maintain a cordial, helpful, and constructive attitude.

- (8) Public relations, information work, visual aids are highly specialized activities. Keep in close touch with all new developments in these fields so that new ideas and improvements can be shared with all extension workers.

(B) Orientation as to Attitudes.

- (1) When you go to the field, take the attitude of an ambassador of good will and all that it implies. Explain how we are prepared to serve the States and request suggestions as to how we might provide additional help. Bring to the solution of problems a deep sense of good fellowship and common purpose. Be a good listener. Let me repeat, please: Be a good listener.
- (2) Explain our key policies. Emphasize our efforts to maintain the principle of localization and the reasons behind it. Enlist State interest and cooperation in maintaining procedures for making this principle effective. It is important if we want to advance a coordinated program of national agricultural information that is truly effective with farm people, and that makes the educational arm of the U. S. D. A. a strong one.
- (3) Public relations begin at home. So, finesse, tact, and good judgment, as well as knowledge, are essential ingredients of the successful field trip.....
- (a) Remember, please, that the weight of Federal Extension influence with the States increases in direct proportion to the uniformly aggressive support given by its representatives to national extension policies. Learn what those policies are and be ready to support them. Otherwise, the position of your administrative officers and your associates will be weakened.
- (b) Don't criticize national agricultural policies maintained by the U. S. D. A., and don't disparage the programs of other U. S. D. A. agencies. As official representatives, it is not our function to bring about improvements in broad policies and programs. That is the function of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Congress. It is all right to discuss them, but do it constructively.....and then only if you are sufficiently well grounded on their nature, purpose, and the reasons for them. Make it your business to understand them.

- (c) Let's follow through on this matter of keeping not only an unprejudiced attitude, but an understanding attitude on national policies. It is important. This is the way I look at it.....you represent the Federal Extension Service. The Federal Extension Service represents the U. S. D. A. to the State extension services, and, vice versa, the State extension services to the U. S. D. A. So, keep delicately balanced in the center of that U. S. D. A.-land grant college bridge. Do not become so steeped with purely State points of view that you cannot fairly present the Federal program and encourage cooperative State participation in it. On the other hand, do not become so imbued with Federal policies that you cannot understand the constructive modifications necessary to convert those policies into realistic action on the State level.
- (d) Be proud of your associates; pay tribute to their accomplishment and be tolerant of their weaknesses. We are all derelict in our duties sometimes, goodness knows. Basically, however, we all want to keep our gabardines spotless .....to be perfect and do the best job that a human being can possibly do. We should recognize that trait in others and build upon it, shaking off, as much as possible, our own emotions, prejudices, and self-interest.
- (e) Don't take the heat off of me or you by pointing your finger at someone else. If something has gone wrong, get the facts and promise that they will be investigated (see that the promise is fulfilled).
- (4) Don't play blindman's buff. If you don't have the answer at your fingertips for some perplexing question, wire for it, if the matter is urgent. If it isn't urgent, promise that it will be supplied by mail. Always deliver on any commitments made. That establishes confidence.
- (5) When discussing the extension information job with the State extension director or extension editor, never urge, unless invited, an increased budget or staff for extension editorial work. Rather discuss extension information work on the basis of needs, problems, operations, services, effectiveness, etc. If the director gets a full comprehension of the value of information and visual work on a State and a county basis, he will take what steps he can to provide the necessary budget. If he doesn't understand it, no amount of direct urging for more information personnel will be successful.
- (6) When discussing the information program, don't push one medium too much over other basic media. Proceed on the basis of a balanced information job so that farm people will receive information in various ways from numerous sources. The State extension editor has four basic services which must be maintained if an effective job is done in utilizing public

communication media to: (1) Improve farm and home practices; (2) report to the public on how public funds invested in Extension have been used; and, (3) promote better public relations between Extension and cooperating organizations and the general public, especially farm people and those who are interested in rural welfare. These basic services are:

News.  
Radio.  
Publications.  
Visual aids.

These are not all of the media the successful extension editor uses, but they are the most important. Studies have shown that out of every 100 persons adopting better farm and home practices, about 38 said this was due to popularized scientific information read, seen, or heard in bulletins, newspapers, on the radio, or in other mass media. In addition to handling these four basic services which involve the production and release of extension information to rural people, and to city people, too, the extension editor should train staff members, county extension agents, and, to some extent, local leaders in the production and use of such media. He should issue a house organ for the State and county staff; he must prepare articles for farm and other magazines, many types of statements, talks, and other materials, provide many useful services for the director and his staff.

- (7) You will gain renewed strength from the fresh points of view and experiences that you find in the field. These will be exceedingly valuable to your future work. Keep your mind open to them.
- (8) Be agreeable, sincere, and helpful at all times. We can gain the full confidence and respect of our associates only if each of us does his level best all the time to conduct his work in such a way as to contribute to the stature and dignity of the Extension profession.

## (II) Planning for the Field Visit.

- (A) Consult field reports of previous trips made to the same State by other staff members of the Division. Be prepared to follow up on ideas and suggestions made in these reports.
- (B) Read State plans of work on publicity and visual instruction.
- (C) Read last State annual report of publicity and visual instruction.
- (D) Ascertain State financial budgets for operating the publicity and visual projects.

- (E) Talk with field agents of the Division of Field Coordination who work in the States to be visited.
- (F) Ascertain if studies are being made in the State which are concerned with publicity or visual aids and be prepared to support whatever plans the Division of Field Studies and Training has under way.
- (G) Talk with other members of the Division of Extension Information staff to ascertain what problems in their fields of work need discussion when you get to the State. Remember that you are representing the coordinated program of the entire Division, and not just an isolated segment of that program.
- (H) Make a list of the special matters that you intend to discuss.

(III) Arranging for the Field Visit.

- (A) Any trip should be considered in the light of economy and efficiency. Unless there is some special situation, field trips should be arranged to include from four to six States in the same geographical area on the same trip. Plans should be made far enough in advance to work out efficient and economical travel schedules. We should recognize that there is plenty to talk about. Allow enough time in each State. Don't crowd yourself, and don't be in a hurry to rush off.
- (B) A letter should be prepared for Director Wilson's signature to the State extension director asking for his permission to visit the State and to talk with his staff. A copy of this letter should be sent to the Division of Field Coordination.
- (C) Simultaneously, a letter should go from the chief of the Division to the extension editor concerned regarding your plans to visit the State. Subsequent correspondence can be carried on direct.

(IV) Making the Field Visit to the State.

(A) Chronology of Conferences.

- (1) Report first to the State extension editor; discuss your plans with him; ask him to make arrangements with other persons to whom you would like to talk.
- (2) As soon as possible after this preliminary talk, see the State extension director. If he does not happen to be accessible at that time, say a few words to him on the phone or leave a message with his secretary. Be sure to let him know that you are in the State.

- (3) A final contact with the director is also important. Express appreciation for the opportunity he gave you to talk with his staff; deliver any findings or suggestions that your judgment dictates. It will be up to you to convince him that your visit has been constructive and helpful....that is, helpful to him and his staff.

(B) Persons To Consult.

Make contacts with the following persons through the extension editor. Discuss in advance with the editor what you are going to say. Ask him if there are any pitfalls to avoid, if he has any suggestions for points to make that would help him in his relations. Invite him to sit in with you if he wishes.

(1) State extension director:

- (a) The director is an extremely busy person. Indicate that you don't want to take up too much of his time. Remember that he isn't interested in you just because you came from Washington. He is interested because of the contribution that you can make to his program. See if you can organize your contribution so that you can get it across in 5 minutes or so. After that, the value of what you say will drop rapidly.
- (b) Tell him why you are in the State. Emphasize service.
- (c) Discuss some of our broad policies and aims. Explain how we try to implement these policies in the information we send to the States for localization; such activities, for instance, as farm flashes, publications integration, distribution of publications, movies, and other services to States. Indicate what help we need to accomplish such implementation.
- (d) Give a report of what we are trying to do nationally through magazines, radio, press, cooperating organizations, U. S. D. A. and other Government agencies, in supporting extension work in national or regional media.
- (e) Discuss our program for publications improvement, and any other current information projects that need support, such as the national cooperative extension booklet, emblem, etc.
- (f) Discuss the State extension information job.
- (g) Ask the director for suggestions and make him feel that his suggestions are helpful.

(2) State extension editor:

- (a) Repeat the foregoing, but get into more of the details of operations and procedures. The editor will have many

gripes to get off his chest. That is only natural. Listen to them gracefully and understandingly.

- (b) Get, as much as possible, an understanding of the extension editor's position in the organization....where he fits in administratively, what his responsibilities are, etc. Does he play any part in planning, make any contribution to it from the public relations point of view?
- (c) Formulate an appraisal of how much of a balanced extension information job is being done. Where are the strengths and weaknesses? What are the editor's primary problems and handicaps? Is his vision broad or narrow? Does he have a good comprehension of his objectives and ways of reaching them? Is he keeping his director, State supervisors, and specialists informed about what he is doing to support their work? Are home economics and 4-H Club work adequately supported? Are all the media and channels being serviced?
- (d) Review with the editor his plan of work (also the plan of work for visual aids). Review some of the materials prepared and issued. Get a good idea of quality as well as quantity.
- (e) Get the editor's evaluation of our work and services and his suggestions for improvement.
- (f) Discuss the weekly letter to extension editors, farm flashes, homemaker chats, the Review, information kits, and all the other materials we send out.
- (g) Discuss the editor's relationships with other U. S. D. A. agencies (PMA, etc.). Are such relationships close, lukewarm, or nonexistent?
- (h) Find out what State points of view are on specific programs: Housing, fat salvage, farm labor, gardening, etc., etc.
- (i) Discuss the last EEAC report.
- (j) Get all the suggestions you can.

(3) State county agent leader:

- (a) Discuss briefly what our policies are, what we are trying to do, what can be done to help county agents widen their educational influence and reduce their service activities by greater use of information and visual media; any special programs, such as gardening, in which they are interested, etc. Get their slants.

(4) State home demonstration leader:

- (a) Same as for county agent leader, but also report what we did to support Home Demonstration Week, and what we are doing currently to support the home demonstration program. Tell the leader of our interest in home demonstration work. Get suggestions.

(5) State 4-H Club leader:

- (a) Same as for county agent leader with emphasis upon what we are doing to support 4-H Club Week, 4-H Achievement Week, the National 4-H Club Camp, the 4-H Congress, the 10-point 4-H guidepost program, the program to double 4-H membership by 1950, and the like. Get suggestions.

(6) State extension specialists:

- (a) Interview a few in each State, enough to get a cross section of specialist opinions, points of view, and suggestions.

(7) Other State cooperators:

- (a) If there is a visual instruction specialist, talk with him. Find out what he is doing.....his production activities, his teaching activities (State and county).....his distribution activities.....how his work is being coordinated with the information program.

- (b) Talk with the publications distribution officer (he may be the extension director, the extension editor, administrative assistant, or someone else) about the Federal-State publications integration and distribution program. See what his problems are and ascertain what knots must be untied. We no longer send supplies of publications except on specific request. However, once requested and received they should be swiftly sent on their way to the potential user of the information. Ascertain, too, if he is keeping other members of the State staff (particularly the specialists concerned) informed about the availability of new U. S. D. A. publications and incorporating their needs in his requests for supplies.

- (c) Talk, of course, with various members of the extension editor's staff either individually, or at a meeting of the group.

- (d) Talk with as many other persons at the institution who handle information work outside the extension editor's office as possible, such as the experiment station editor.

(e) Talk with radio farm directors, newspaper editors, farm magazine editors, and others, as you can, to get their slants on the way that the dissemination of agricultural and home economics information is handled by Extension.

(8) County extension agents:

(a) If possible, talk with representative county agents, home demonstration agents, and 4-H Club agents to get their slants on information and visual aids, their problems in these fields, and their points of view.

(9) Before leaving the State give a verbal report to the director and editor of your activities, findings, and suggestions.

(C) General Instructions.

(1) In your talks with any extension worker, be alert for good stories that can be used in the Extension Service Review. Report such stories, with a brief description of the key points, to Mrs. Clara Bailey Ackerman. She will write for the story, giving you credit for passing on the suggestion.

(2) Keep us informed by wire or brief letter of any matters of immediate interest that we should know for use in Director Wilson's letter, in my letter to the editors, or for other use.

(3) If any changes are made in your itinerary, wire in the changes.

(V) Follow-Up When You Return to the Office.

(A) Field Report.

(1) A written, brief report for each State visited which will state what you did, whom you interviewed, high lights of their points of view and suggestions, problems from the State point of view and from our point of view, and your personal appraisal of the situation and its relation to general objectives being sought. (Much of this report can be written while you are still in the State or en route.) Confidential matters should be covered in a separate statement.

(2) Copies of the field report should be made for:

(a) State extension director.

(b) State extension editor.

(c) Division of Field Coordination.

(d) Walter Conway and permanent files.

(e) Division of Extension Information.

(B) Follow-Up Correspondence.

- (1) A letter should be prepared from Director Wilson to State extension director transmitting the report. The letter should briefly point up some of the things in which the State extension director would be administratively interested.
- (2) A letter should be prepared from the chief of the Division of Extension Information transmitting a copy of the report to the State extension editor.
- (3) You should write individual letters as necessary expressing appreciation for courtesies extended on field trips.

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AS THE RED QUEEN SAID TO ALICE, "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place."

